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ABSTRACT

This lesson is based on travel in and study of 12 of Mexico's states and visiting Mexico's cities, schools, universities, and communities. Finding many parallels between Mexico and the Mariana Islands, the lesson focuses on providing a historical overview of both countries and on describing modern variations in social life, land area, politics, and economics in both places. The lesson concludes with an exercise that offers 15 diverse learning activities about Mexico and the Marianas (and an answer sheet). (BT)

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## "Mexico and the Marianas U.S. A."

Comparing & Contrasting

By: Ambrose M. Bennett, MA

launched the Galleon trade through the Marianas was the source of the many similarities between Mexico (Spain) and the Marianas. Spain ruled the Marianas for over 350 years during the 16, 17, and 18th centuries. After the conquest of Mexico, the Spanish Galleon Trade was launched and the colonization of the Marianas began. The galleons would leave the port of Acapulco primarily with silver headed for the Philippines to trade for S. E. Asian goods such as spices, pottery, jewelry, silk and other goods, but their first stop would always be in the Marianas for provisions. The Galleon Trade route pass the Marianas was only in one direction because of the need to use the wind. Therefore, many things that were taken from the Philippines that ended up in the Marianas had to travel to Mexico first by way of a northern sailing route.

Hernando Cortez arrived in Mexico in 1521, the same year Magellan arrived in the Marianas. The Spanish conquest of Mexico took place very much the same way it happened in the Marianas. The indigenous Indians of Mexico rebelled just like the Chamorros in the Marianas. The church would eventually be the focal point of the colonization in Mexico and the Marianas. Still today the church is the center of social life in the Marianas and the cities and communities of Mexico. Just as the women of Mexico have been credited with saving the indigenous cultures, so have the women of Rota been given most of the credit for saving the Chamorro culture during the Spanish colonization. Scholars attributed this phenomenon to the fact that women had no role in the church leaving them to practice their traditional way of life. The diseases introduced by the Spanish also killed many of the indigenous people of both places. It was stated in a lecture "over 22 million indigenous Indians in Mexico died from one epidemic alone."



*The Author is seen here in Mexico on top of the Pyramid of the Sun. The Pyramid of the Moon is in the background. Marianas and Mexico are like the two pyramids in this photo--very similar in many ways.*

This lesson is presented as a courtesy of the U.S. Department of Education, the Fulbright-Hays Program and COMEXUS. This comparison is based on my travels and study of twelve of Mexico's 31 states visiting many cities, schools, universities, and communities.

The Mariana Islands and Mexico are indeed parallels in many ways. The conquest of Mexico by the Spanish that

Similarities can also be drawn from the Spanish strategies used in Mexico and in the Marianas. In Mexico (city of Saltillo) it is very well known that the Spanish used or recruited one indigenous group of people to control the others. This same strategy was applied in the Marianas when the Manmágas (upper class Chamorros) took an oath to Spain and was deputized as a militia to control the remaining Chamorro population.

A very interesting comparisons of similar events that significantly affected both places would be the visions by Juan Diego (Sainthood on July 29, 2002) and the vision by Taga. You can't study Mexico without studying Juan Diego and his vision of the "virgin Guadalupe" and you can't study Marianas history without studying Taga and his vision of the "Virgin Mary".

The significance and similarities of Juan Diego's and Taga's visions are they were the first "indigenous" persons to have a vision of bear witness to a miracle. Although Juan Diego's vision was of an indigenous woman, both visions made it easier for the Spanish to convert the indigenous people who had been rejecting their attempts to baptize them. The most surprising discovery is the first documentation of Juan Diego's vision in 1649 is only eleven years from the documentation of Taga's vision in 1638. The visions by both men had a positive perpetual affect on the people of Mexico and the Marianas that is still obvious today with the Catholic religion still dominant in both places.

The piñata is also a very common site in both Mexico and the Marianas. But the piñata originated in China and was taken back by Marco Polo where it was used in Italy and later in Spain as part of the children's Catechism. The seven cones on the earlier piñatas represented the seven deadly sins and when the

children were able to overcome the sins by destroying the piñata, they were rewarded with the candy from the piñata. The piñata was later passed on to Mexico and the Marianas.



*There are many places in Mexico that hasn't changed very much over time like this small town outside the city of Puebla.*

There are many similarities and connections between Mexico and the Marianas. The indigenous people of Mexico had a barter economy before the Spanish arrived just like the indigenous people of the Marianas. The indigenous people of Mexico also incorporated the Spanish language with their own just as the Chamorros have done. Another commonality is the ceremony or ritual for the dead. In 1842, the first French Cemetery in Mexico began the celebration of the "day of the dead" on November 1<sup>st</sup> of every year. In the Marianas this same event takes place on November 2<sup>nd</sup> because we are a day ahead but we call it "All Souls Day". Mexico and the Marianas have been synchronized in this religious activity with the only major difference being the people in the Marianas don't bring the deceased favorite food to the cemetery. The introduction of corn in the Marianas was also a result of the Spanish who



learned about corn from the indigenous people of Mexico. Corn became the staple food in both places and is still the staple food in Mexico. But corn has been replaced by rice in the Marianas.

A good example of the "cultural" exchange and connections between Mexico and the Marianas would be the "Kumaires". Kumaires are the mother and godmother of a child. Kumaires in Mexico are said to be the world's biggest gossips. "If you want to know about something in the community see one of the Kumaires". Kumaires are very much a part of the Mexican and Marianas culture.



In Mexico, Kumaires are considered the world's biggest gossips. This "paper-mache" replica is a common joke in Mexico that they never stop gossiping.

Another good example is the Guelaguetza celebration held in Oaxaca, Mexico. This is a celebration of giving and helping each other in the same way Chamorros practice "chen chule" but there is no yearly celebration for chen chule by the Chamorros.

Grasshoppers are sold on the streets of Oaxaca. They are said to be full of protein. The saying is "you will return to Oaxaca if you eat the grasshoppers." Do you have any unusual foods where you live? Fruit Bat is the Marianas' specialty.

If a Chamorro were to visit the city of Vera Cruz, she/he might think they are still in the Marianas. The climates are almost identical and more amazing; the plant life is almost identical to the Marianas. You will find the same fruit trees like Mango, Flame trees, money trees, bamboo, flowers and plants right down to the coconut and banana trees. Vera Cruz is also located on the east coast of Mexico on the Gulf of Mexico making it more interesting as to how the same plant life in the Marianas is on the east coast of Mexico. The origins of the Marianas' plant life are still very much a mystery considering much of the plant life in the Marianas came from somewhere else.

The religious connections, the traditions of Kumaires, the fact that the people in Mexico and in the Marianas count in Spanish, the many plant similarities are just a small illustration of the many similarities that exist between Mexico the Marianas. Because the Galleon trade only traveled in only one direction, it is important to note that further study is needed to really identify the true "origins" between Mexico and the Philippines as to the many things in the Marianas.

The growing phenomenon that Mexico and the Marianas share is the loss of indigenous top professionals to the U.S. mainland. Many of the indigenous youth in the Marianas that leave and attend college don't return and in Mexico there is a continuous migration of top professionals.

The connections and similarities between Mexico and the Marianas are extensive and most of the similarities will probably last forever because they are imbedded in the way of life in both places. But there are also many contrasts between Mexico and the Marianas. For one, there are "many Mexico's" because of the many indigenous groups that live there and the variations in social life, politics, and economics in the different parts of Mexico. In the Marianas there are only two indigenous groups with almost no differences on either island.

The major contrasts between Mexico and the Marianas are the population demographics, land area, politics and the desire for change. Unlike the Marianas that has a small population and is suffering from a labor shortage, Mexico is suffering from an over blown population. Mexico City (largest in the world) and the surrounding suburbs alone have over 25 million people in this area alone. The Marianas is limited to 15 small islands while Mexico has millions and millions of square miles in land. The politics and system of government are also

different in the Marianas with one exception, in both places family ties usually have a great deal to do with the selection and success of political leaders.

But it has been Mexico's desire and will to change that has propelled Mexico to the world stage, especially with the discovery of oil and the NAFTA agreement now in place. The custom in the Marianas has been change should come slow. The island tradition of "day by day, little by little" may not be sufficient to compete in a world where **globalization** (economic competition) is taking center stage in the world at an alarming rate.

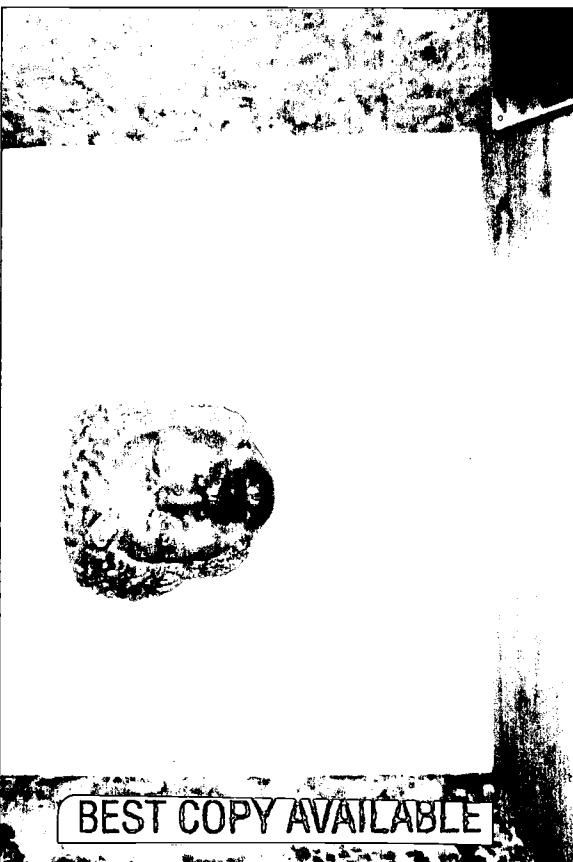
Mexico is making great strides in the field of education. Mexico has a "community service" program that requires all high school students by Federal Law to perform 400 hours of community service in their major field of study and college students must perform 900 hours of community service. This program has helped tremendously to increase the level of students attending college, it has added to the labor force without cost to employers, and has given students a true sense of "citizenship".

The University of Guadalajara has been so successful under the program they have started several companies including a TV station. The community service program has also allowed students to gain course credits, valuable knowledge and experience in their career choices. Every student at one time will work mornings and attend school in the evenings to fulfill her/his community service requirement.

The economics of the Marianas and Mexico are really not comparable because of the vast difference in human and natural resources between the two places. But what makes Mexico so unique economically is the "under ground" economy of artisans

that do not contribute to the government tax system. Artistry in local arts and crafts is so important to Mexicans because it provides the additional income needed to survive. Today, millions of souvenirs are sold almost on a daily basis in Mexico and not subject to taxation. This has created a second economy that has also eliminated Art in schools because most students develop an artistic talent at home.

Politically, Mexico and the Marianas are similar when it comes to the principles of Government but the dynamics of politics & parties are very different in each state of Mexico with the exception being the importance of family ties.



*This is a monument to one of the fallen heroes in the revolutionary war of Mexico. Guerrero is also a very popular name in the Marianas.*

There is still more study to be done in Mexico, especially in the state of Guerrero. The city of Acapulco which is in the state of Guerrero was the Spanish port in Mexico where the

Galleons docked. There were many Chamorros kidnapped from the Marianas that might have gone ashore in Acapulco. There is a good chance of even more connections between Mexico and the Marianas existing in the state of Guerrero.



*A display at the "Museo Del Desierto" (Museum) in Coahuila, Mexico.*

Unlike the islands of the Marianas, Mexico is well known for its many archeological sites. Dinosaur remains have even been discovered in Mexico making it a paradise for archeologist and anthropologists.

The Galleon trade has connected Mexico and the Marianas in many ways and there is still much to be learned about Mexico and the Marianas U. S. A.

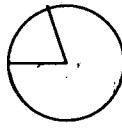
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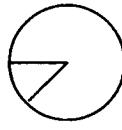
1. Vocabulary words will be defined by using the "context clues" in the lesson (answers will vary).  
**Colonization, phenomenon, strategy, significant, perpetual, staple, and globalization**
2. Recall- Who was credited with saving the cultures in Mexico and the Marianas? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Inferring- What caused the most deaths of many indigenous people in Mexico and the Marianas? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Cause & Effect- What effect did Juan Diego's & Taga's visions have on the indigenous people? (answers may vary)
5. Hypothesizing- What would the results of the Spanish attempts to baptize the local people have been if the visions by Juan Diego and Taga had never taken place? (answers will vary)
6. Recall- Who grew the first corn plants? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Inferring- What is the strongest connection between the Marianas and Mexico? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Recall- What city in Mexico has an environment like the Marianas? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Inferring- From what two places could plants in the Marianas have come from? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Recall- Name the major differences between Mexico and the Marianas. \_\_\_\_\_

11. Hypothesizing- What would a "community service" program like Mexico's do for your region? (answers will vary)
12. Recall- What are the major economic differences between Mexico and the Marianas? \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_
13. Problem solving: If the population of the Mexico is est. at 100 million and the population of the Marianas is est. at 70,000, what is the "ratio" of people? 1 person in the Marianas will = \_\_\_\_\_ number of people in Mexico.
14. Critical Thinking- Did the Spanish colonization help or hurt the Marianas & Mexico and tell why?
15. Analytical Thinking-Time Zone



Chamorro Time Zone



Mountain Standard Time

## 2:00 PM Sunday -Mariana Islands

A. 6:00 am Tue \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_ 8:00 PM Thursday  
C. 9:00 PM Friday \_\_\_\_\_

## 11:00 PM Saturday-Mexico City

\* You can make up more problems on your own if you need more practice.  
Class Activity: Each student creates a list of comparisons and combine all list on the board. What is the total number?

Answers:

1. open	2. women	3. disease & fighting or warfare	4. open	5. open	6. Mexican Indian
7. religion	8. Vera Cruz	9. Mexico & Philippines	10. population, land area, politics, changes		
11. open	12. Human resources & natural resources		13. 1428.5 or 1429		
15. a. 3:00pm Monday	b. 11:00 am Friday	C. 6:00 am Friday			



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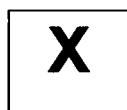


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